

Hints for Europeans  
Engaged in Commerce and Industry  
ON THEIR FIRST ARRIVAL IN INDIA

with special reference to conditions in  
BENGAL and ASSAM.

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Printed for Private Circulation.

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LONDON :  
Worrall & Robey, Ltd., 137, Fenchurch Street, E.C.

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# HINTS FOR EUROPEANS ENGAGED *in* COMMERCE *and* INDUSTRY ON THEIR FIRST ARRIVAL IN INDIA

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**I**N the path of the European who goes to India in order to engage in industrial undertakings there are many pitfalls, owing to the fact that there are Oriental social and religious customs and practices of which he can have no knowledge if he has had no previous experience in the East. It is obvious that the advice of those more experienced under whom he serves during his earlier years before he attains any position of independent responsibility should be his best guide in avoiding such pitfalls. But it may be of some service to the newcomer if at the start he is placed in a position to see the point of view of the peoples among whom

he is placed. It is axiomatic that good sense and consideration for the feelings of others are unfailing lubricants to oil the wheels of human intercourse; yet knowledge is not to be despised.\* It is for the purpose of imparting this knowledge that these Hints have been written.

### **Position and Point of View of the Newly Joined European Assistant.**

Anyone transferred from mill, engineering, or agricultural experience in Great Britain to an assistantship in a factory or tea garden in India should regard himself as launched on a new career in which a definite attitude of mind must be adopted in two respects; he must have consideration for his Indian fellow workers, and he must always feel that in his own conduct the credit of his own race and country are at stake. Apart from the fact that it is the right thing to do, there is the motive of self-interest; for, unless he is a success in handling labour, his own career is imperilled. He steps into a world entirely new to him, with unaccustomed responsibilities and with power

and influence over labourers and artisans of many temperaments and many degrees of skill and adaptability, who have to be directed so that the result may be profitable to his employer. He must therefore act with greater caution and perspicacity than ever before. He must learn quickly that it is by the exercise of firm and kindly tact that he can keep his employees contentedly absorbed in their work. Also he must appreciate that the head artisans and gangers (*sardars*) are at the moment more important by reason of their experience to his employers than he himself. If through his personality and justice he can inspire goodwill, he has his reward; he will succeed in getting things done and will enjoy a cheerful loyalty, amounting at times to devotion. The Indian will be found to be tolerant to obvious inexperience; but the European must reflect that his personal habits and conduct come under keen and not unintelligent scrutiny.

#### **Main Divisions of Society in the Indian Public.**

In India, as in Europe, are to be found the classes and the masses. Among the

latter are usually included labourers, the agricultural workers, artisans, and the smaller traders. The upper classes include the aristocracy among the landowners. The middle classes have a wide range, including on the one hand wealthy professional men, such as lawyers and doctors, and on the other hand comparatively poor members of the clerk classes. In the same middle group are to be found merchants and landowners. The middle classes are styled in the vernacular by a phrase which may be translated the "respectable classes," in contradistinction to manual workers. It should always be borne in mind that the clerks in offices with whom the European assistant is brought in contact have, on account of their caste and occupation, a social status to which the pay they are drawing is no guide. The manual workers or labourers, as they are called, in factories or tea gardens, have nearly all agricultural holdings and are agriculturists at heart. There is as yet no type of pure factory worker, though the tendency is that such a type will be evolved as industrialism develops.

In the jute mills the majority will be found to be immigrants from outside Bengal proper, though the weavers and mechanics are sometimes local Bengalis, while on the tea estates practically all are foreigners, coming either from Bihar (West of Bengal) or from Central India (to the South-West of Bengal) or South India or, in the case of the Darjeeling tea area, from Nepal. The domestic servants, who may be included in the masses, have also to a great extent agricultural holdings of their own. Many of these, such as washermen and cooks, will also be found to have their homes outside Bengal and Assam.

The idea underlying the system of caste prevalent among Hindus is that mankind is made up into different divisions and sub-divisions which are distinct from one another. The important points in connection with this distribution are the preparation of food, marriage within the caste, occupation, and a common caste feeling. It means to a great extent that a man's occupation in life is determined by his birth. For practical purposes, as

regards the classes performing menial duties with whom a European is brought in contact, this means that each performs his caste occupation, whether as Bearer, waiting at table, carrying water, sweeping the floor, digging earth and so on. This is not merely on ordnance like a British Trade Union rule based on self-protection; it is deeper than that. It is based on the deep-rooted traditional divisions in Indian society. Hence, while it is true that many Hindu castes have left their traditional occupation, it is not only unwise but unfair for the European to ask an Indian to perform an act other than that which he is found to be doing until the European has found by experience what things are permissible. In other words, custom should be respected by the European, however much he may resent it. There is a consoling reflection that custom as often operates to ease the lot of the European as to thwart him. Every caste or class has then its own practices and prejudices. The practices of each caste, and the subdivisions of caste among Hindus are, it should be remem-

bered, intimately bound up with their religion. Any interference with them is therefore not merely an interference with a social convention, but interference with their religion. The newcomer should realise that Indians, both Hindus and Mohammedans, are fundamentally a religious people: their social habits are intimately linked up with religious authority; and their religion has its manifestation in their social practices. All arrogant or disdainful reference to Indian prejudices or customs should therefore be avoided.

As typical examples of the grades in social status it may be stated that a cobbler is lower in social status than a brassworker, a washerman lower than a cowherd.

### **Religious Divisions and Practices.**

The European assistant will soon appreciate that religious differences in India mean more than mere differences of faith. Though there are many minor divisions, he should appreciate from the very first, by the differences in names, that there are

two great classes of Mohammedans and Hindus. These two great classes live, except when religious animosities are excited, in terms of normal harmony. Yet there are differences which will be recognised in time: in dress, in physiognomy, and in speech. It should be known that beef is anathema to Hindus, and pork to Mohammedans; and that while the slaughter of cows is contrary to the creed of the Hindus, this is an element in one of the festivals (called the *Bakr Id*) amongst Mohammedans. The newcomer should endeavour from the first to acquire knowledge of their respective manners and customs and to pay due regard to them. Amongst Hindus the great festival in Bengal and Assam is the "*Durga Puja*" in the months of September-October. On this occasion Hindus are anxious for family and religious reasons to go to their homes, and reasonable consideration should be shown in this matter by employers. Mohammedans require particular consideration when, during the month of *Ramazan* (the ninth of the Mohammedan year which consists of

twelve lunar months) they fast from sunrise to sunset for full 30 days. Both to domestic servants and to workers of all kinds, recognition of this fact should be shown at that time. Especially is a tenderness to human endurance required when the month of fasting coincides with the hot weather: then the daylight hours are long, and the abstinence from food and drink militates against normal efficiency of work.

**Classes with whom European Assistants may  
be Brought in Contact.**

The domestic servant is, of course, the first group of Indians with whom the European assistant is brought in contact. It will be found that considerate treatment will, as a rule, meet with response. Constant nagging he abhors. In the case of sickness of his European master, the Indian servant, however humble he may be, is capable of great devotion. The European assistant also has to deal in the course of his work with the manual worker, whether it be the man of the agriculturist type or the factory worker in factories. The labourer class respects

firmness, justice, and kindness. In the offices will be found the men who, by reason of their social status and education, perform clerical duties. Such will be found to be men of various grades of the middle class. Their education varies from a smattering of English to a knowledge of which any well educated man whose mother tongue is English might be proud. The average European assistant has unfortunately few opportunities of meeting Indians of the upper or upper middle classes, unless they be doctors, lawyers, or the upper trading classes; and he is therefore prone to judge Indians as a whole by those whom he generally meets in the course of his employment, such as labourers, artizans, domestic servants, and the smaller mercantile classes. But he will find, as he rises in positions of responsibility, that he will come in contact with men who by virtue of birth or by reason of their mental equipment are entitled to the highest consideration.

#### **Necessity of Learning the Vernacular.**

It goes without saying that an ability to understand the vernacular and to make

oneself understood is a great asset. The native script is an unfortunate handicap towards the acquisition of a scholarly knowledge of any Indian vernacular. But a knowledge of the script is not so terribly difficult as many people think at the first acquaintance. With a little patience and effort it can be mastered. The advantage of being able to read as well as speak the language is enormous. For the newcomer there are, however, books in which the Roman character is used. For the most part when dealing with servants generally, or with labour recruited for the tea gardens from the up-country Hindustani speaking tracts, a knowledge of Hindustani is required. No opportunity should be lost to practise conversation with people of all classes who do not know English. The natural self-consciousness of the British race in halting attempts to speak a foreign language need not be a bar, as it will be found that the Indian shows a natural courtesy in avoiding any merriment over such attempts. The general use of interpreters should be avoided, as soon as the back of the study

has been broken. Careful attention will give a useful foundation within three months' application. Those who have to deal with Bengali-speaking people, as, for example, peasants and dealers in the tea districts of Sylhet and Cachar, in the areas of jute cultivation in Eastern and Northern Bengal, or Bengali-speaking weavers in the jute mills, will find that a knowledge of Bengali is desirable. Bengali is more difficult for the newcomer; but even in the case of this language reasonable application for six months will well repay the time and trouble taken. A list of textbooks suggested as suitable for study is annexed to these Hints. The newcomer should make a determined attempt to tackle the language difficulty in his first year; if he dallies, he will probably never learn properly.

The Indian will unburden himself more readily to one who can understand his own tongue with reasonable facility; and hence a working knowledge will prove of great help in preventing friction which arises from misunderstandings. Especially does this apply to the giving of direc-

tions, as so often the Indian, when receiving directions (whether from timidity or from courtesy) does not like to ask for the repetition of an instruction which he has imperfectly understood. Subsequent misunderstanding may be due to imperfect appreciation of what is said to him. It is therefore desirable that the superior should take the initiative in asking whether his instructions have been understood. Conversely, it is essential to understand what is said in the way of exposition or explanation, though in practice the European will find that in the case of the Indian vernaculars he learns more quickly to understand than to make himself understood. Further, if an Indian imperfectly acquainted with English addresses him in English, it is obvious bad form to make sport of the Indian's halting English.

#### **Accessibility.**

It is a cardinal point in dealing with Indian subordinates that one must be accessible to all. This requires sympathy. It is an Indian tradition that even the lowest subordinate should have the right

of presenting his own case personally; and even those who may be in the wrong and against whom disciplinary action may have subsequently to be taken, appreciate a calm and patient hearing. It is a counsel of perfection to be at all times accessible; but it is a wise practice—it might even be said, a necessary practice—to approximate to this by fixing definite times during working hours when representations of all kinds may be received. The superior learns much which would otherwise not come to his ears, and on the other hand the petitioner has the great satisfaction that he has had his say. Should one be approached by a crowd, or by a deputation of working class people, it is desirable to ask that one should come forward as a spokesman and the others should be asked to sit down. This arrangement is understood by the people, and makes discussion more easy for the European. The qualities which should be exercised as a matter of course are kindness and consideration together with patience and courtesy; but patience all the time.

In connection with accessibility, it is desirable to be on guard as far as possible against the practice of headmen, or other personal attendants, levying toll from those who wish to approach their master. It is impossible to check this altogether; but it is imperative that it should not be imagined that the European master encourages the practice or even knowingly condones it.

#### **Treatment of Subordinates.**

The Indian attaches great importance to his prestige "*izzat*." This may be translated as "self-respect." The European should assume from the very first that any Indian with whom he deals, no matter how scanty his clothing, how poor his dress, or however low his social status, has his own sense of prestige, in a greater degree than first impressions would suggest. While it is a cardinal virtue in handling men, whether in the East or in the West, not to reprove them in the presence of others who are subordinates, it is particularly the case in India. This applies alike to the case of the foreman in a works, a village head-

man, a head clerk in an office, or the leader of a gang of labourers. These men must command the respect of the subordinates if they are to be efficient; and it is fatal if this respect is compromised by open reproof. Indians too are very human in appreciating any notice taken of good work; and encouragement and approbation are never thrown away, if given for good reasons. Favouritism should not be adopted, however, with any class of subordinate: there should not be even the suspicion of favouritism. It is better to be respected by all men at all times for impartiality than to acquire an evanescent popularity among the few. But if a European wants goodwill from his subordinates, he must give goodwill.

In a mill, factory or tea garden, it is desirable that European assistants, when instructing workers, should realise that physically they are weaker than European artisans, and temperamentally they are more sensitive. Therefore, anything in the nature of rough treatment should be avoided. A Mohammedan's beard should never be touched. Striking should be

considered absolutely forbidden: assaulting is not only wrong and cowardly in itself, but is dangerous, and may entail serious consequences for the assistant, the worker, and the employer. Moreover, it is a penal offence. The worker will usually be found docile to learn, though he is very conservative about any innovations. European assistants are tempted to use towards manual workers and domestic servants vernacular words of abuse which they have heard, in order to reprove what they believe to be slackness, imperfect work, or want of intelligence. The language of abuse, whether in English or in the vernacular, is greatly to be reprehended. The only result is that the European forfeits the respect of the Indian while he loses his own self-respect. The Indian is peculiarly sensitive to the use of bad language in English. Even a term which in English is comparatively harmless, like "stupid," bites deep if applied to a man of the clerk class.

#### **Practice at Interviews.**

Indians would prefer to wait some time, rather than that they should return with-

out seeing the person on whom they call. A chair should be offered to those who are of the better classes; and, of course, the age and importance of the visitor must be considered. It is not necessary to offer a chair to a clerk who attends on business. It is the Indian practice that the visitor should get permission to leave, and hence it is necessary for the newcomer to learn that the initiative lies with him to intimate, by means of the same social conventions as are prevalent in the West, when the interview may be considered closed. It is bad form to interview a visitor when at a meal unless the visitor is one who might be invited to partake of it. It is also bad form to continue smoking when a visitor belonging to the respectable classes is received. In conversing with an Indian visitor any enquiry regarding the ladies of his family should be avoided, except possibly in the case of an Indian gentleman who has adopted a European mode of life.

In dealing with requests made at the time of interviews, it is to be remembered that the main request very frequently

comes at the end. If the interview is closed too quickly, the Indian may quite possibly leave without stating the object of his visit. It is wise to be patient and listen, even although the interview may appear to be finished. In giving a refusal, if it has to be made, definiteness is most essential, though of course in courteous language. There is a tendency amongst Indians, even amongst those who might be presumed to be sufficiently educated to understand the shades of meaning in English words, to interpret a promise to consider the matter, as an actual promise to fulfil the desire of the applicant.

### **Salutations.**

Handshaking is not normally an Oriental method of salutation, but it has been generally adopted. It is usual to shake hands with those visitors who are of such status that a chair would be as a matter of course offered to them. Moreover, if a visitor of position offers to shake hands, the advance should be met in the spirit in which it is offered. The Indian commissioned officer of the Army

especially appreciates hand shaking in addition to the military salute which he gives. Police officers of the status of Inspectors and upwards would expect the same courteous treatment. <sup>e</sup>

Salutations from any Indian should invariably be answered, no matter how humble the person may be. This should always be given by the right hand. Indeed the right hand should always be used in giving or taking any article.

### **Use of the Head-dress.**

In the case of menials, such as domestic servants, the proper dress of respect includes unshod feet and covered head when they come before their employer. Visitors of position who are orthodox in their habits would keep on their head-dress; so would officers wearing uniform, such as police officers. When they have adopted English habits of living they sometimes are in a difficulty as to whether to keep on their head-dress, according to the Indian custom, or to take it off, according to the English custom. Except on cere-

monial occasions this type of Indian would prefer to remove his head-dress.

#### **Use of the Honorific Address in Speech.**

While “ *tum* ” or “ *tumi* ” (you) is used in addressing any one of menial position, persons of higher status should be addressed as “ *Ap* ” (Hindustani) or “ *Apani* ” (Bengali). It is better to say “ *Ap* ” in the wrong place than to be capable only of saying “ *tum* .” In the case of a Hindu, the first and second words in his name are what might be styled Christian names. It is permissible to say Jogendra Babu or Radha Charan Babu, in addressing one whose names are Babu Jogendra Nath Bhattacharji or Babu Radha Charan Guha. The last name is a caste patronymic which is not ordinarily used in speech. In the case of Mohammedans it is usual to use the full name in ordinary speech, such as Khuda Baksh or else simply Moulvi, and, in the case of a Mohammedan clerk, Munshi.

#### **Use of the Word “Indian.”**

By general consent, the use of the word “ native ” and “ coolie ” are to be

avoided by Europeans in India, as they are considered to offend the susceptibilities of the educated Indian. It is a simple matter to use the term " Indian " and " labourer " and avoid giving offence.

### **Conventions Regarding Meals.**

In the matter of food, the newcomer may unwittingly make mistakes. He should not offer to any Indians food or drink, nor touch their own food or drink: nor should he touch the brass or earthen vessels in which their food is cooked. He should not even go near Indians when cooking is going on; nor let his shadow from the bright sun rays pass over their food or the home-made kitchen. This, it should be understood, is not merely a matter of prejudice, or even simply a matter of prejudice against contact with Europeans. In the first place there are, among Indians themselves, certain classes who cannot take food from others; and, in the second place, all Europeans are classed with persons of no caste, in whose presence only the very lowest will eat.

This rule of caste is, as already explained, bound up with religious sanction. So it is not merely the breaking of their observances which is at stake. If any food or vessel containing food is touched by one of a lower caste, or by a European, it means that the vessel and the food have to be thrown away; and hence a material loss is sustained, which may mean much to a poor manual worker. This instruction is of importance in the case of the workers who take their meals publicly in the open air; those of better position take their meals in a private apartment where they cannot be overlooked.

### **Treatment of Animals.**

In connection with their attitude to animals, it may be said that Hindus like the elephant, venerate the cow, and respect the monkey. Both Hindus and Mohammedans loathe dogs and despise the donkey. The Indian of position has not the same feelings as the British about dogs. The British people are fond of dogs and make pets of them: but both Hindus and Mohammedans generally look upon

the dog as an unclean animal. The care of a dog in a household is therefore entrusted to one of the sweeper caste, a caste very far down in the social rank. Hence a pet dog belonging to a European should not be allowed to lick the hands of Indian visitors.

### **Travelling in Railway Carriages.**

Railway travelling is open to all who pay the fare of the class in which they travel. It is in the railway carriage where differences of habit may conceivably be mutually unpleasant, and where friction has arisen in the past. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that rude and offensive behaviour by Europeans towards Indian fellow passengers in public conveyances is one of the things that causes the greatest resentment and most seriously injures European prestige and influence. Each member of a community, whether European or Indian, has a right to make himself comfortable, provided he does not interfere with a fellow passenger. An Indian might, for example, remove his turban without being conscious of com-

mitting rudeness, though the same Indian would keep his turban on as a mark of respect if he were calling on any person of position. If the European has an Indian gentleman as a fellow passenger on the railway, he should not treat his companion as an intruder and selfishly consult only his own comfort. Indians will always respond to a considerate unbending, and are not unsociable. The European will find that it is he who is expected to make an approach to cordiality.

### **Restraint over Temper.**

In the tropics there are many things to try the temper, which are non-existent in more temperate climes. The hot weather may produce skin irritation, known as "prickly heat," which may be maddening at times. The insects in the rains and the mosquitoes at all times are troublesome, even exasperating. Apart from business worries, fever may sap a man's reserve strength, and make him mentally irritable. Nevertheless, the European, whatever his position, should learn to

keep command of his temper, whatever the provocation. In the first place, loss of temper makes one lose respect, which is essential in dealing with subordinates; in the second place, it may tempt to assault, which is, as already stated, cowardly, unworthy and dangerous; and, in the third place, it tends to the loss of the confidence and trust of the employer.

### **The Heritage of Character.**

It should be an inspiring thought to one stepping into Indian life for the first time that he is succeeding generations of men of British birth of whom there have been many who by virtue of character, sense of duty and high principles have left a permanent impress upon those amongst whom their lot was cast. It should be the aim of every one of their successors, whatever his station or duties, to be a living exemplar to the East of all that is best in the personality of the West.

**Suggested**  
**TEXT BOOKS, Etc. ON LANGUAGES**  
(see page 14).

**BENGALI:**

**INTRODUCTORY—**

“An Easy\* Introduction to Colloquial Bengali in the Roman Character.” By JAS. ALEX. MACDONALD and HARI KRISHNA GANGULI. (Thacker, Spink and Co., Calcutta. Rs.2/8/-.)

“An Introduction to Colloquial Bengali.” By SUTTON PAGE. (W. Heffer and Sons, Cambridge.)

**MORE ADVANCED—**

“Bengali—Literary and Colloquial.” By R. P. DE. (Dey Brothers, New Market, Calcutta, 1911. Rs.3/-.)

Gramophone Records of Colloquial Bengali have been made available by the Linguaphone Language Institute, 24-27, High Holborn, London, W.C.1.

**HINDUSTANI:**

**INTRODUCTORY—**

“Domestic Hindustani” (Roman Character). By Lt.-Col. D. C. PHILLOTT. (Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta, 1919.)

**MORE ADVANCED—**

“Hindustani Manual.” By Lt.-Col. D. C. PHILLOTT. (Published by the Author: 2nd Edition, Calcutta, 1913.)

